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SUBJECT: PARTY OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF SOCIALIST PARTY 'YES'  
CAMPAIGN ACKNOWLEDGES ANTI-AMERICAN THEME IN CAMPAIGN WAS  
INCLUDED TO PLACATE 'HARD LEFT' ELEMENT IN SOCIALIST  
ELECTORATE

REF: A. A) PARIS 1106  
[B](#). (B) PARIS 1014

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Josiah Rosenblatt  
for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

#### SUMMARY

[1](#). (C) At a meeting with PolOff on March 16, Francois Rebsamen, Mayor of Dijon and Socialist Party (PS) official in charge of the party's campaign to mobilize left-leaning voters to vote 'yes' in the upcoming referendum on the EU Constitution, acknowledged that the "Yes, for a strong Europe against the United States" theme (reftels) in the PS's campaign was included "in order not to lose" the hard-left, anti-American wing of the party. Rebsamen said the about 5 percent of left-leaning voters in France were "strongly anti-American" seeing the U.S. as a "militaristic power", and that about 25 percent of left-leaning voters were "culturally anti-American," resentful of (but resigned to) the ubiquitous American influences on nearly everything in French life. Rebsamen stressed that the "Thank-God-for-the-Americans reflex," -- the gratitude felt by the French for the U.S. role in WWII -- "was still very strong," and implied that Americans should not underestimate the power of that in a "historically conscious nation" like France. Rebsamen, a key member of the party leadership that has coalesced around party First Secretary Francois Hollande, said that Hollande was steadily "gaining in stature" among party members, and that Hollande's successful spokespersonship in the upcoming referendum campaign would re-inforce his claim to lead the party in the presidential elections of 2007. Rebsamen said that, despite the "completely unexpected" strong and angry current of popular sentiment against the proposed EU Constitution, left-of-center voters would "pull themselves together" before the moment of truth on May 29, and the proposed Constitution would pass. END SUMMARY.

#### PROVENANCE OF ANTI-AMERICAN THEME IN PS YES CAMPAIGN

[2](#). (C) Francois Rebsamen is the PS official in charge of the design and coordination of the party's campaign to motivate center-left voters to vote 'yes' to the proposed EU Constitution in the referendum May 29. His party position is National Secretary in Charge of Federations and Education. One of the themes of the PS campaign is "Yes, to a Europe that can stand up to the United States" ("Oui, a une Europe forte face aux Etats Unis") (reftel B). As soon as it became public that such a singling out the U.S. would be appearing on posters, websites, etc. Ambassador and DCM objected to the Socialist Party leadership (reftel A) that encouraging French voters to support the proposed Constitution against the U.S. was damaging to trans-Atlantic relations. PolOff re-iterated this message to Rebsamen on March 16. Rebsamen, as have other party leaders in response to Embassy objections, claimed unconvincingly that this element in the campaign was not anti-American because informed decisions about Europe's future on the world stage require consideration of other powers on that stage, especially the U.S. Promptly belying this assertion, Rebsamen acknowledged that the decision to include this theme in the campaign was intended "to show the anti-American faction in the party that we were with them. Otherwise we could lose them to the 'no' vote," Rebsamen explained. In Rebsamen's view, consideration of the U.S. role in the world in the referendum debate about the future of Europe is substantively relevant and politically expedient.

#### ESTIMATED STRENGTH OF CENTER-LEFT, ANTI-AMERICANISM

[3](#). (C) Rebsamen said the "between 5 and 7 percent of socialists are strongly anti-American, perceiving the U.S. as a threatening, primarily military "hyperpower" (in the phrase coined by Socialist, former Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine). Rebsamen added that he estimated that "about 25 percent of socialists are culturally anti-American," by which he meant those who resent the way influences of American origin are all-pervasive part-and-parcel of globalization, including in

France. Rebsamen said that he believed that these estimates applied both to Socialist Party members -- about 120,000 persons -- and to the Socialist electorate at large -- about 12 million persons. (In the 2004 regional elections, of nearly 41 million registered voters, almost 30 percent voted for PS candidates).

#### DAMPENING THE ANTI-AMERICAN RHETORIC

14. (C) Rebsamen said that these voters were highly sensitive to the argument that Europe should be strong and united enough to be able to hold its own vis-a-vis the U.S. He made no bones about admitting that the possibility of losing a significant portion of these voters to the 'no' camp prompted the party leadership to go ahead with this campaign theme. Rebsamen, as have Hollande and other party leaders, went on to underline that in public statements and in campaign rallies discussion of the U.S. would remain "on a high plane" -- focused on debating Europe's role in world with respect to other centers of power "such as the U.S. and China," and not descending to slanted, inflammatory polemics about current U.S. policies and leaders. COMMENT: So far, in speeches and TV appearances that Embassy is aware of, PS leaders have been true to their word. Their evocation of "the strong Europe able to stand up to the U.S." theme has been low key, presented as a long-term issue and deliberately given less prominence than other 'yes' campaign themes, such as standing with the other Socialist parties of Europe in supporting the proposed Constitution and voting for the "Charter of Social Rights" included in the proposed Constitution. END COMMENT.

#### RIISING TIDE OF 'NO' -- "NOT WHAT WE EXPECTED"

15. (C) Rebsamen said that the vociferous, rising tide of anti-Constitution sentiment was "not what we expected," particularly among socialists after the internal, party referendum last December, when Francois Hollande and the 'yes' camp won the party's endorsement of the proposed Constitution by a handsome majority (58 percent). Rebsamen added that the strength of 'no' sentiment had "surprised everybody" -- from President Chirac to the opposition party leaders who had demanded a referendum, assuming it would pass easily. Two polls, released respectively on March 18 and March 21, showed that among those who had decided how they would vote, the percentage of possible 'no' voters had surpassed that of yes voters for the first time -- by 52 to 48 percent in the most recent poll. However, all the polls also show that the number of undecided voters also continues to remain high, at between 30 and 40 percent. Rebsamen admitted that winning the referendum was going to be "much, much harder than expected," but that, in the end, he was quite certain that voters would "pull themselves together," separate the range of their complaints about France's economic stagnation and political class from the matter at issue in the referendum, and vote for France's leadership role in Europe by endorsing the proposed Constitution.

#### COMMENT

16. (C) In the PS, the referendum and its results are seen as setting the stage for selection of the party's presidential candidate for 2007. PS party rules require that the party candidate be selected by vote of the party members, who have a record of making independent choices (for example, prior to the presidential elections of 1995, party members rejected the candidate endorsed by the party leadership, Henri Emmanuelli, and elected his self-appointed challenger, Lionel Jospin). Rebsamen, though he had earlier been a supporter of party number two Laurent Fabius (an outspoken advocate of 'no'), has emerged as a key member of the group of party leaders close to party First Secretary Francois Hollande. Not surprisingly, Rebsamen sees a successful referendum campaign, led by Hollande, as strengthening Hollande's claim to be the party's standard bearer in 2007. A solid 'yes' victory May 29, particularly if supported by a majority of center-left voters, would give Hollande that much more credibility among party faithful. Any other result however, including a very close 'yes' victory, would leave the door wide open to Hollande's principal challengers for the endorsement of party members -- former Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn and former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, as well as the "retired" non-candidate former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. Neither Fabius nor Strauss-Kahn is popular among the party's rank-and-file. Former Foreign Minister Vedrine, for example, is among those PS members who are convinced that, should Hollande's support among party members founder, only Jospin can garner a solid majority of party member votes. Socialist party operatives report that in mid-April Jospin is scheduled to return to the public eye in a series of appearances calling on socialists to vote 'yes.' His re-appearance before the party faithful, despite his protestations that he does not seek a leadership position, will suggest to Socialist voters that the man polls consistently show as the toughest candidate for the center-right to beat could be drafted in extremis. Should that happen, Jospin's detractors will accuse him of having

carefully positioned himself to appear on the scene at just  
the right moment to unify a deeply divided party. END  
COMMENT.  
Wolff